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ABSTRACT

The effects of the Concept 6 calendar on educational quality and opportunities in Los Angeles secondary schools (six junior and four senior high schools) were studied. This is Phase I of the study of the Concept 6 Calendar. Concept 6 schools operate year-round on a different calendar, but with the same instructional time as other schools. Data were collected through teacher and principal questionnaires and school test scores on: (1) educational programs; (2) instructional quality; (3) quality of worklife; (4) resource availability; and (5) student outcomes. The Concept 6 calendar offered potential for greater continuity of instruction with consequent advantages. Worklife was not evidently enhanced and few differences were found in the availability of resources. Student outcomes could not be shown to benefit from Concept 6 in comparison with other year-round schools, but detrimental effects were not shown either. (SLD)

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LOS ANGELES EXPERIENCE: EVALUATING THE RESULTS OF CONCEPT 6

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PHASE I
STUDY OF THE CONCEPT 6 CALENDAR:

DO CONCEPT 6 SECONDARY SCHOOLS PROVIDE SUPERIOR, EQUAL, OR LESS EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS?

1987

PUBLICATION NO. 507

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION BRANCH

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DESIGN OF THE INQUIRY

Why was the study conducted?

Overall goal. The study was designed to investigate the effects of the Concept 6 calendar on parity and equity in educational quality and opportunities.

- Concept 6 schools are year-round schools which operate on a different and shortened calendar from other year-round schools in order to accommodate more students.
- Students in these schools attend school 17 fewer days, but because the length of each school day is extended by 33 minutes at the elementary level and 39 minutes at the secondary level, they attend school the same number of instructional minutes as all other students in the district.

Concept 6 Study Committee. Superintendent Handler appointed a committee of six district administrators familiar with the program and with available district data to design and complete the study.

Specific Evaluation Issues. The Committee identified five primary evaluation issues, to assess the effects of the Concept 6 year-round calendar on:

Educational programs, particularly course offerings
Instructional quality
The quality of worklife
The availability of resources
Student outcomes

The Study. The Spring 1987 study, known as Phase One, focused on the secondary level. Phase Two, to be conducted during the 1987-88 school year, will assess the effects of the Concept 6 calendar at the elementary school level. Also, it will provide more detailed analyses of the Concept 6 calendar in secondary schools.

SAMPLING AND QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

What schools were in the Phase One Concept 6 study?

The study included all secondary schools on the Concept 6 calendar, including six junior high and four senior high schools. Serving as comparison schools were schools on other YRS calendars and PHBAO schools on a traditional calendar which resembled the Concept 6 schools in background and demographics.

How were the data collected?

Data were collected through teacher and principal questionnaires, available district records including school test scores, and interviews with district administrators.

FINDINGS ON SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

What are the effects of the Concept 6 calendar on educational programs?

- Interview results indicate some benefits for student programming in Concept 6 schools compared to schools with 90/30 school calendars. First, the Concept 6 calendar involves three rather than four tracks of students. Therefore, the Concept 6 schedule permits opportunities for a greater number and variety of course offerings within each track, because of a greater pool of students attending school on each track. The smaller number of tracks also reduces the planning and monitoring load of administrators since they are responsible for only three tracks instead of four tracks.

- Scheduling of tracks within Concept 6 schools holds additional advantages for continuity of programming. In two of the three Concept 6 tracks, student on-track instructional periods are continuous for 16 weeks, and only one track is interrupted by holiday breaks. In contrast, two of the four-track instructional periods are interrupted in other year-round calendars.

- Although off-track breaks in Concept 6 schools are longer than those on other year-round calendars, teacher responses about students' needs for review, learning, attitudes, and attendance indicate no adverse effects. District data on attendance in remedial and enrichment intersession courses, however, suggest that the longer break period may be used to good advantage. Concept 6 junior high school students are more likely than their 90/30 peers to participate in remedial and enrichment intersession courses. Only a small percentage of students, however, participate.

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

What are the effects of the Concept 6 calendar on quality of instruction?

- Teachers in Concept 6 secondary schools indicated that the additional daily time allocated to their classes is used in a variety of ways, (i.e., to provide additional practice, to give extended lecture and instruction, and to give more individual attention). They indicated that they used the additional time least frequently to cover more content, therefore, raising questions about the teachers' ability to cover the core curriculum in the fewer days available to them.

- The potential for greater continuity of instruction in Concept 6 schools, mentioned above, should benefit the instructional quality in these schools. Other indirect indicators of school and instructional quality gathered for the study (absence rates, opportunity transfers, suspensions, drop-out rates) are difficult to interpret because the schools in the study served different grade levels.

- Another potential benefit of the Concept 6 schools is the availability of off-track regular teachers to serve as substitutes in their own school--substitutes who are familiar with school routines and the students. While Concept 6 teachers applied for off-track assignments to a greater degree than their 90/30 counterparts, only a small percentage of teachers on either calendar were involved. According to principal reports, however, the benefits of having regular teachers substitute may be offset by the burnout these teachers experience during their on-track time.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

What are the effects of the Concept 6 calendar on the quality of worklife for teachers and school administrators?

- The extended off-track periods give teachers more days off during which they can rest or supplement their income through substitute teaching. While an extended vacation period carries obvious personal advantages, teacher responses indicated few differences in job satisfaction between Concept 6 and 90/30

teachers. Most secondary level year-round school teachers, regardless of calendar, were satisfied with their track assignments, their work hours, and their schedule of on- and off-track time. Concept 6 junior high school teachers were relatively less satisfied with their longer daily work hours.

- Teachers also were relatively satisfied with the availability of textbooks, instructional materials, and other supplies, and the timely delivery of these resources.

- Teacher responses indicate that sharing classrooms continues to be a source of discontent.

- Indirect indicators of quality of worklife (teacher requests to transfer into schools, turnover rates, and years of service) also show few differences between teachers in Concept 6 and 90/30 schools. These indicators suggest, however, that both of these calendars are more appealing to teachers than are PHBAO non year-round schools on a traditional calendar.

- School-based staff development programs also appear to benefit from year-round calendars, particularly from the opportunities afforded by the exchange of workdays between teachers on different tracks. Insufficient advance notification of and opportunity to participate in district/region staff development programs, especially during the summer months, continue as problems. No apparent differences in staff development opportunities were found between the 90/30 and Concept 6 calendars.

RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

What are the effects of the Concept 6 calendar on the availability of resources?

- Few differences were found between Concept 6 and 90/30 schools in the resources available to the schools. The district apparently has made significant progress in allocating resources and instructional materials in time for the July 1 start of year-round schools. The availability of region support resources during the summer months and the continuity of support services are seen as problems in these schools.

- The provision of maintenance and custodial services is another continuing problem for all year-round schools. With no extended period of pupil-free days, cleaning must be done "bit by bit," and year-round schools are never completely cleaned.

RESEARCH QUESTION FIVE

What are the effects of the Concept 6 calendar on student outcomes?

- Analyses of student performance on the CTBS and the California Assessment Program over a three-year period do not show consistent differences among the Concept 6, 90/30 and comparable PHBAO non year-round schools. The results from both types of tests, however, show that all schools in the study scored below the national and district averages and poorly in comparison with other demographically similar schools in the state.

- District achievement test results from the CTBS in reading and mathematics show no difference among Concept 6, 90/30, or comparable PHBAO non year-round schools. California Assessment Program results at the junior high school level, however, suggest that students in 90/30 schools outperform students in the other schools in reading and writing, and that both Concept 6 and 90/30 schools generally perform better than PHBAO non year-round schools in both subjects.

- CAP results, at the senior high school level, especially from 1985-86, generally favor Concept 6 schools over comparable PHBAO non year-round schools. Subsequent studies should further explore the achievement issue closely through more controlled analysis. One possibility is to compare students in Concept 6 schools to area resident students who are assigned to other schools because of the Capacity Adjustment Program (CAP) and Satellite Zone Program (SAT).

- Analysis of two years of School Attitude Measure results shows little difference between students in Concept 6 schools, 90/30 schools, and PHBAO non year-round comparison schools. Drop out data, for the senior high school sample, slightly favors Concept 6 schools.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

What are the implications for policymakers?

- The study found few dramatic differences between Concept 6 and 90/30 schools. These findings, however, may be regarded as positive because the fewer number of days of the Concept 6 calendar does not appear to result in lower test score performance compared to 90/30 and PHBAO non year-round schools. However, all year-round schools scored below the district and national averages on the CTBS. Further, the Concept 6 calendar may offer additional advantages with regard to the number and variety of course offerings per track and continuity of programming.

- Instructional time to cover course content, as shown through the research literature, is a powerful variable in student learning. Ultimately, it is difficult to avoid this principle in judging the Concept 6 calendar.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As a result of this study, what are the next steps for the Concept 6 study?

Phase Two of the Concept 6 study will be conducted during the 1987-88 school year. It will examine the effects of Concept 6 at the elementary school level.

Issue One. Paralleling this year's (Spring 1987) secondary study, the evaluation will investigate equity issues related to educational quality and opportunities, quality of worklife, adequacy of resources and other support services, and student achievement and attitudes.

Issue Two. The effects of the Concept 6 calendar, will be compared with other year-round and traditional calendars on a variety of variables (e.g., teacher and student attitude and attendance, retention rates, bilingual education, teacher morale, and teaching efforts).

Issue Three. Additional analyses will examine the effects of the Concept 6 calendar on student achievement at both the elementary and secondary levels. The analyses will compare the achievement of students attending Concept 6 schools with the achievement of students who reside in the Concept 6 schools' attendance areas and attend Capacity Adjustment and Satellite Zone receiving schools.

Issue Four. The study will also compare schools' achievement before and after changing to a Concept 6 schedule, if feasible.